

## MEXICAN FOLK-LORE.

*Catalogue of a Collection of Objects illustrating the Folk-lore of Mexico.* By Prof. Frederick Starr. With 32 Figures. Pp. xiii + 132. (London: Folk-lore Society D. Nutt, 1899.)

THE Museum of Archæology and Ethnology in Cambridge has recently been enriched by the permanent loan from the Folk-lore Society of a valuable collection illustrating the folk-lore of Mexico, which had been generously given to that society by Prof. Starr, the energetic and enthusiastic Professor of Anthropology in the University of Chicago.

Prof. Starr enhanced the value of the collection by writing a full and descriptive catalogue, which has just been issued by the Folk-lore Society as one of their publications. Owing to the labour Prof. Starr has expended upon it, this catalogue will prove of permanent value to students of folk-lore, although the author modestly disclaims it to be a treatise on Mexican folk-lore.

There are three main groups in the population of Mexico: the enlightened and progressive Mexicans, of whom Prof. Starr speaks in high terms, the Indians of the south, and the common Mestizos or mixed bloods of Northern and Central Mexico. The six hundred and more objects in the collection illustrate the customs and beliefs of this last group, whose daily life is a mixture of that of Spain in the fifteenth and of America at the end of the nineteenth centuries, and whose religion is a mixture of native paganism and imported Christianity, the latter being itself a complex of Old-World beliefs and practices. "Here," as Prof. Starr writes, "are proverbs, witty and wise; here are folk-songs, sweet and touching; here are folk-tales untouched by scepticism; here are charms and formulæ; here are witches and fairies in the full height of their power; here are popular street celebrations and dramas; here are a hundred Oberammergau with passion-plays and miracle-plays unspoiled by the crowds of visitors; here are a thousand strange survivals of pagan barbarism in the midst of Christian civilisation."

One-third of the book is devoted to children's toys and games, illustrated by over a hundred specimens; but, in addition, there are descriptions of numerous outdoor and indoor children's games, which will be of great interest to those who pay attention to this not unimportant branch of ethnography. Many of the popular ceremonies are very quaint, especially those connected with Holy Week. From Thursday to Saturday the church bells cease ringing, as on the Friday "the spirits of the bells have gone to Rome." During this interval great rattles are sprung in the church towers, and innumerable small rattles are sold in the streets, and the noise they make must be dreadful. On the "Saturday of Glory" the gaiety reaches its culmination in the public destruction of Judas, the betrayer. Thousands of images of Judas are sold annually, of all sorts and grades, and from a few inches to ten feet or more in length. In some places a drama is played in the streets on St. James's Day, representing the victory of Christianity over paganism; the heathen wear hideous masks.

The Feast of the Dead is a famous festival, and the collection contains a large number of skulls, skeletons,

funeral processions, and toys that delight the people on that occasion. Enough has now been said to indicate the great interest of this unique collection, more complete than any hitherto made in Mexico. The Cambridge Museum cannot now be safely neglected by students of comparative religion, as, in addition to other folk-lore collections, there are the collections presented by Mr. Skeat from the Malay Peninsula, and by Mr. C. Hose from Sarawak, as well as the specimens obtained by Dr. A. C. Haddon's expedition.

## ORGANIC EVOLUTION.

*A First Book in Organic Evolution.* By D. Kerfoot Shute, A.B., M.D. Pp. xvi + 285, 12 plates (10 coloured), and 27 figures. (London: Kegan Paul Trench, Trübner and Co., Ltd., 1899.)

THE aim of this little book is an interesting one—to supply a handy introduction to evolution-doctrine, which will be of use to over-burdened students of medicine and to others who may not have time to read the classic works. "The author makes no claim for originality, unless it be in the manner of presenting the subject. He has utilised the facts collated by other observers, and sometimes quoted the exact language and expressions of well-known writers on evolution, and has endeavoured to put them together in a way that may be helpful to those who are beginning the study of the evolution-theory." It seems to us that the author has attained no small success in his difficult task, for the book is clear and interesting; it is neither too simple nor too difficult; it is conspicuously free from crankiness and dogmatism; and it is evidently the work of one who has had experience in the task of teaching.

The plan of the book may be indicated by an enumeration of the sections:—Organic cells, heredity with variation, unstable environment, transmutations of living forms, natural selection, evolution of man, classification of animals and plants, works of reference, and glossary. There are ten coloured plates, which to some eyes will add attractiveness to the volume, though several of them show an unnatural and unpleasant predominance of red tint, *e.g.* in the pouter pigeon on the frontispiece, the birds of paradise, and the *Kallima* butterflies.

A thoroughly good introduction to the study of organic evolution might be written, even at the present youthful stage of ætiology, by an author of real genius, like Goethe, but the probability is that he would not write it; it might also be written by a genius according to Buffon's mistaken definition,—a man of persistent patience, but he would probably die niggling at his task; it might more feasibly be written as a co-operative work by six experts who were not very good friends. Then we should have a work that would endure. For what we have, however, let us be grateful; and Prof. Shute's book is a very useful introduction.

At the same time we must make two criticisms. (a) Is it wise in "a first book in organic evolution" to have any talk either about religion or the castration of habitual criminals? We admire the author's courage of conviction, but in regard to the subjects referred to we doubt the relevancy of the virtue here. And might not the dry classification chapter have been left out to

advantage, especially when it tells us that "sponges possess, essentially, a bilateral symmetry," and various other things which are not true? (b) In an elementary work of this sort it is of the utmost importance that there should be precision in the use of words, and though the author has been unusually careful we do not think that he has always succeeded. Thus, he speaks about "the forces of heredity"; he tells us that "Darwin convinced naturalists that the great underlying principle of the tree-like system of classification was heredity"; he calls the nucleus of the fertilised ovum "hermaphroditic," and so on. Is it wise at present to call the chromosomes "the hereditary threads"? is it fair to speak of "the gastrula phase in man's existence," and to refer to a figure of a typical gastrula, as if it were all plain sailing? is it warrantable to say "the evidence seems to favour the view that acquired characters can be transmitted"? is anything gained by making a special category of "insect-selection"? Without criticising the exposition of the Pangenesis hypothesis, we should also like to ask if it is not the case that Darwin expressly said that he thought of the gemmules not as circulating in the blood, but as diffusing from cell to cell? But a book should be judged relatively to its aim, and Prof. Shute is to be congratulated on the success with which he has accomplished a difficult and serviceable piece of work.

J. A. T.

#### OUR BOOK SHELF.

*Mining Engineers' Report Book and Directors' and Shareholders' Guide to Mining Reports.* By Edwin R. Field. Pp. 39. (London: Charles Griffin and Co., Ltd., 1900.)

EVER since the search for the gold mines of El Dorado in 1595 was described by Sir Walter Raleigh in his work on the discovery of Guiana, the prototype of modern mining reports, experts have constantly been engaged in reporting on mineral deposits with a view to induce capitalists to invest money. A report on a mining property should set forth clearly details of the position, means of access, fuel, water and timber supply, amount of development, and the character, value and form of the deposit. It should, moreover, be written in so lucid a manner as to be intelligible to the educated investor. Unfortunately, this is not always done. Many so-called experts of eminence have been known to fill up their reports with a bewildering mass of abstruse technicalities and theories, and to omit many essential details requisite for arriving at the value of the mine. While it is obvious that a thorough examination of a mine cannot be covered by a set of rules, it is highly desirable that the work should be carried out in a systematic manner, and errors of omission avoided. With this object in view, Mr. Field has drawn up a series of suggestions in a convenient form. He enumerates 126 queries that should be answered as far as possible in the report on any mine. Blank pages are appended; and it is recommended that the various heads should simply be indicated by numbers during the inspection of the property, and subsequently incorporated in the observations recorded in the report. The volume is issued in pocket-book form so arranged that the blank pages, which can be replaced by others, shall be facing the page of questions. The right hand pages, which would be covered when the book is in use, are devoted to selected tables and memoranda. The volume is of handy size—it measures 5 by 3½ inches—

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and will undoubtedly prove useful to experienced mining engineers. Whether it will also be of assistance to directors and shareholders, as the title-page suggests, may be questioned.

B. H. B.

*Flora of Kent.* By F. J. Hanbury, F.L.S., and E. S. Marshall, M.A., F.L.S. Pp. 444; with two maps. (London: F. J. Hanbury, 1899.)

MANY years ago "The Flora of Middlesex," by Trimen and Dyer, showed the way for a scientific construction of a local flora, and it has served as a model for all the best works of this kind which have appeared since its publication. To say then that the present volume strongly recalls the best features in the Middlesex Flora is to pay it a well-earned compliment, and, indeed, from cover to cover Messrs. Hanbury and Marshall's book exhibits abundant evidence of a careful, sound and successfully accomplished sifting of an immense body of facts, with the result that the reader is furnished with an exceedingly able and interesting account of the flora of the south-eastern county of England. The introduction includes a sketch of the physiography and geology of the county, and then follows the customary delimitation of the botanical districts into which the whole area is divided. These divisions are, as the authors admit, not entirely based on scientific considerations, but are partly determined by convenience, and some of them are consequently somewhat artificial in character. It would, perhaps, have been advantageous to have added another chapter on the more purely natural geographical distribution of the plants.

The body of the flora is devoted to an account of the plants found growing in the county, together with brief topographical and historical notes.

The work is excellently printed, and will be found of great service to those who care to know about the flora of one of the most interesting counties in England.

*Leitfaden für den Unterricht in der Anorganischen Chemie.* Didaktisch bearbeitet von Dr. Joachim Sperber. Erster Teil. Pp. 120. (Zurich: E. Speidel, 1899.)

A BOOK expressly "didaktisch bearbeitet," and bearing a motto *Repetitio est mater doctrinarum*, would be expected to disclose some novelty of treatment for good or ill. This expectation is, however, not realised in Dr. Sperber's book. It may be described as an aggregation of condensed chemical information, from which it is impossible to augur any good educational result. We have already had a surfeit of this kind of book in England, and can only regret that the improvements now so evident here do not seem to have spread to Switzerland. The illustrations in the book are unnecessarily elaborate, and in some cases altogether superfluous. There are, for example, two striking full-page illustrations—one to show the holding of a platinum spiral in a bunsen flame, the other to show a burning magnesium ribbon. It is really difficult to understand the attitude of mind of a teacher who considers that any intellectual or practical value can lie in pictures of this kind.

A. S.

*Aufgaben aus der Chemie und der physikalischen Chemie.* Von Dr. P. Bräuer. Pp. 70. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1900.)

THE author has collected a number of exercises dealing with some of the most important provinces of general chemistry. The book differs from previous attempts in this direction, inasmuch as attention is paid not only to purely chemical problems, but also, and more especially, to such points as the Laws of Avogadro, Faraday, Joule, &c., together with the elements of thermal chemistry. The explanatory notes at the head of the various sections will be found of great assistance to students working without the aid of a teacher.

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